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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "UM's Center for the Rocky Mountain West gains humanities grant" (1993). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 13119.
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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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Missoula, MT 59812
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This release is available electronically on INN (News Net).

Dec. 3, 1993

UM'S CENTER FOR THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST GAINS HUMANITIES GRANT MISSOULA --

The University of Montana has received a \$520,000 challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to help fund the Center for the Rocky Mountain West's exploration of regional identity.

It was the center's third try for an NEH grant, center director Bill Farr said, and so far it looks like three is the operation's lucky number. The grant requires the University to raise private donations totaling three times the grant amount within five years, and President George Dennison said the center is already two-thirds of the way toward that goal.

"It's a three-to-one match, and we've already got about a million toward that," Dennison said. "So we'll be looking for another \$500,000. At that point we will have satisfied the required match and the money will be in hand.

"I'm very delighted and thrilled by the challenge grant, which will provide us the opportunity to create an endowment at the level that's necessary so that the center can fulfill its mission," he said.

The center's multidisciplinary mission is to preserve, study and celebrate the cultural heritage of the Rocky Mountain West, a region that covers 350,000 square miles, parts of seven states and the southern reaches of three Canadian provinces.

One important center objective, Farr said, is to establish a scholar-in-residence program to bring in leading regional authorities in a wide variety of disciplines. Each scholar, whose term on

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campus might range from one semester to two years, would hold classes, lectures and symposia aimed at stimulating regional thought and discussion.

The scholar in residence would also be instrumental in establishing the theme for another center objective, an annual regional anthology. The anthology would draw on journals, newsletters and other publications from a multitude of perspectives and professional disciplines, providing a one-volume sampler of regional discussion on a particular theme, Farr said.

Other planned uses of endowment funds include: support for regional research; participation in a traveling lecture series throughout the Rocky Mountain West; enhanced library resources; creation of a fund to obtain important documents for the UM archives; and secretarial support. So far the center has been staffed solely by Farr, who also teaches and chairs the history department.

The center is one of the fund-raising priorities identified in the University's \$40 million Capital Campaign, which entered its public phase Oct. 29.

Although most of the center's endowment will come from private sources, Farr said he is "elated" by the NEH grant because it serves as "a kind of stamp of approval that will help raise the level of confidence in the center and in the region."

A primary factor in raising confidence -- and funds -- for the center has been strong backing from UM's president, he said.

"George Dennison has been absolutely foursquare in his support and promotion of a regional studies center," Farr said. "People have been talking about establishing a regional studies center here since the '30s and '40s, but now we've finally got it. Dennison has made all the difference in the world."

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